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SUBJECT: SECOND OIC REQUEST FOR DIPLOMATIC STATUS IN NEW YORK

REF: USUN 0102

¶1. During a brief meeting on February 28, Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Permanent Observer to the UN Ambassador Abdul Wahab handed Ambassador Khalilzad a letter in which he reiterates and expands upon an earlier request (see reftel) that his UN observer office be granted diplomatic status. Abdul Wahab noted that former U/S Burns was aware of the request and that the UN SYG considers this an important issue. Text of the February 28 note, which has been faxed to IO/UNP Edmondson, appears in paragraph 3 below.

¶2. Department may wish to consider this request in the light of our appointment of a special envoy to the OIC.

¶3. Begin text of OIC note: Excellency: On behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I have the honor to request favorable consideration by the Government of the United States with regard to the issue of diplomatic status to the OIC through its Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations in New York. In this context, kind attention is invited to the Diplomatic Note dated 21 January 2008 sent by the Permanent Observer of the OIC to the Permanent Mission of the United States.

It may be noted that this request is in pursuance to Article 146 of the Final Communiqué of the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the OIC Member States held at the UN Headquarters in New York on 2 October 2007. The same has been circulated as official UN document (A/62/507; S/2007/636).

As Your Excellency is aware, the OIC has served as a representative voice for the Islamic World since its inception and has strived to promote cooperation in the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres among its Member States. As the second largest inter-governmental organization in the world, second only to the UN, the OIC represents the voice of a fifth of humanity. It has strived tirelessly to promote moderation and tolerance in the Islamic World and develop greater understanding between the Islamic World and the West, particularly with the United States and Europe.

The OIC is currently represented in the United States and the UN through its Permanent Observer Mission in New York. The Mission serves as the focal point for coordination between the US Government and OIC Headquarters in Jeddah. The OIC Mission also works to promote initiatives in the realm of inter-faith and inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation, both at the level of the United Nations, as well as through the media, academia, inter-faith institutions and other civil society entities in the United States.

However, the work of the OIC Mission is severely inhibited by the absence of diplomatic status from the host government. For example, the visiting delegates from the OIC Headquarters, including even the OIC Secretary General, face

a host of serious difficulties that commence upon arrival at a US port of entry. The employees of the OIC Mission are issued visitor visas which create uncertainties with regard to their status and stay.

It may be noted that the Permanent Observer Mission of the OIC in Geneva has enjoyed diplomatic status from the Swiss Government for many years now.

While we recognize that the process of granting diplomatic status to the OIC will follow course in accordance with the laws of the United States, we believe that the time is right for the initial steps to be taken in this process, given the scope of the OIC to serve as a key player in the realms of common concern to the United States and the Muslim World.

The OIC is fully confident that with Your Excellency's kind assistance, the request for granting diplomatic status to the OIC will be brought to the attention of the concerned authorities of the United States for favorable consideration.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration. /s/ Abdul Wahab, Ambassador and Permanent Observer of the OIC to the UN, New York. End text.
KHALILZAD